The Air University
eSchool of Graduate PME
Serving the World though Distance Learning

Squadron Officer School Distance Learning

Primary Developmental Education (PDE) Version 2.0

Student Handbook

18 January 2017

The Air University
eSchool of Graduate Professional Military Education

Maxwell AFB, AL

http://www.airuniversity.af.mil

This handbook will remain in effect until superseded.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. ABOUT THE PROGRAM

1.1. GENERAL

This Student Handbook is designed as a single-source document for establishing policy, guidance, and procedures related to all students participating in Squadron Officer School Distance Learning (SOS DL) Primary Development (PDE) 2.0 program. SOS DL students are required to know and abide by the guidelines and policies of this handbook.

1.2. INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the SOS DL PDE 2.0 program! The purpose of Distance Learning Professional Military Education (PME) is to provide access to high-quality education for learners stationed around the globe. You will discover the courses within this program of study include broad topics distilled through elements and events of historical significance. The SOS DL program leverages technology, instructor facilitation, and collaborative opportunities to provide an enhanced learning experience. SOS DL also offers students a measure of choice in their educational opportunities. These opportunities include a mix of facilitated and self-paced focused and foundational studies courses, and are designed to ensure that each student receives rank-appropriate professional and personally relevant PME. The self-paced courses allow students to engage with the curriculum at a convenient pace while the facilitated courses maximize opportunities for interaction between students and the course instructor (CI). SOS DL connects students and faculty through engaging content with analysis, discussion, and research on real-world issues/challenges important for all experienced airpower leaders.

1.2.1. DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms are used throughout this handbook to describe specific attributes of our courses.

By type of interaction:

> **Facilitated Course** – A facilitated course has a dedicated instructor and usually 15-20 students who directly engage with their instructor and their peers during the course. These courses may be conducted over a continuous time period of 1 to 3 weeks. Students must remain engaged during each of those weeks, but these courses are administered asynchronously so students are not tied to specific dates and times for online interaction.

> **Self-paced Course** – A self-paced course does not have an instructor and generally has a large number of students. Students may, depending on course guidance, have some engagement with their peers during these courses. Students have up to 4 months to complete these courses.

By material covered:

>**Foundational Courses –** Foundational courses cover the core learning areas that apply to every SOS DL student. These courses include both self-paced and facilitated courses.

>**Focused Studies Courses –** Focused studies courses expand learning beyond the core areas allowing SOS DL students to tailor their educational experience by selecting areas of study they determine best meet their needs. The focused studies courses include self-paced and facilitated courses.

By similarity of courses:

>**Series** – A series of courses (such as the Leadership Series) refers to courses that are closely related and build directly upon each other. A series typically involves between two to four self-paced courses followed by a facilitated course. Self-paced courses may require students to accomplish assignments that are required later in the related series' facilitated course. Students are required to complete four series in SOS DL: Graduate Skills, Leadership Studies, Joint Airpower & Warfare Studies, and Focused Studies.

>**Stand-Alone Courses** – Some focused studies courses are not part of a series. They are self-paced but do not contribute directly to a facilitated course.

1.2.2. WEBSITES

SOS DL PDE 2.0 uses the following websites:

AUSIS (Air University Student Information System): https://ausis.maxwell.af.mil/ This Student Management System (SMS) is used for program and course registration, and checking grades.

Blackboard: https://au.blackboard.com This Learning Management System (LMS) contains all course material. Note: If you use a different Air University Blackboard® site such as acsc.blackboard.com some elements of the curriculum may not function properly.

Support Website: www.aueducationsupport.com contains frequently asked questions and provides access to the help ticket system.

Note: Air University is undergoing a transformation and will be utilizing new SMS and LMS in the near future. Check *Announcements* for latest news.

1.3. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

1.3.1. COURSES

Students must complete a minimum of 16 courses to complete the SOS DL program. The SOS DL program currently consists of 25 courses (see Figure 1 below). All courses are administered online using a Learning Management System. There are 19 self-paced, online courses that deliver readings, videos, and interactive content, and validate student understanding using the tools of the LMS. There are six facilitated courses led by an instructor that offer opportunities to use and deepen the skills learned in the self-paced courses through interaction with peers and the course instructor. NOTE: Courses in Focused Studies will expand in the future to provide students more tailored choices in their PME experience.
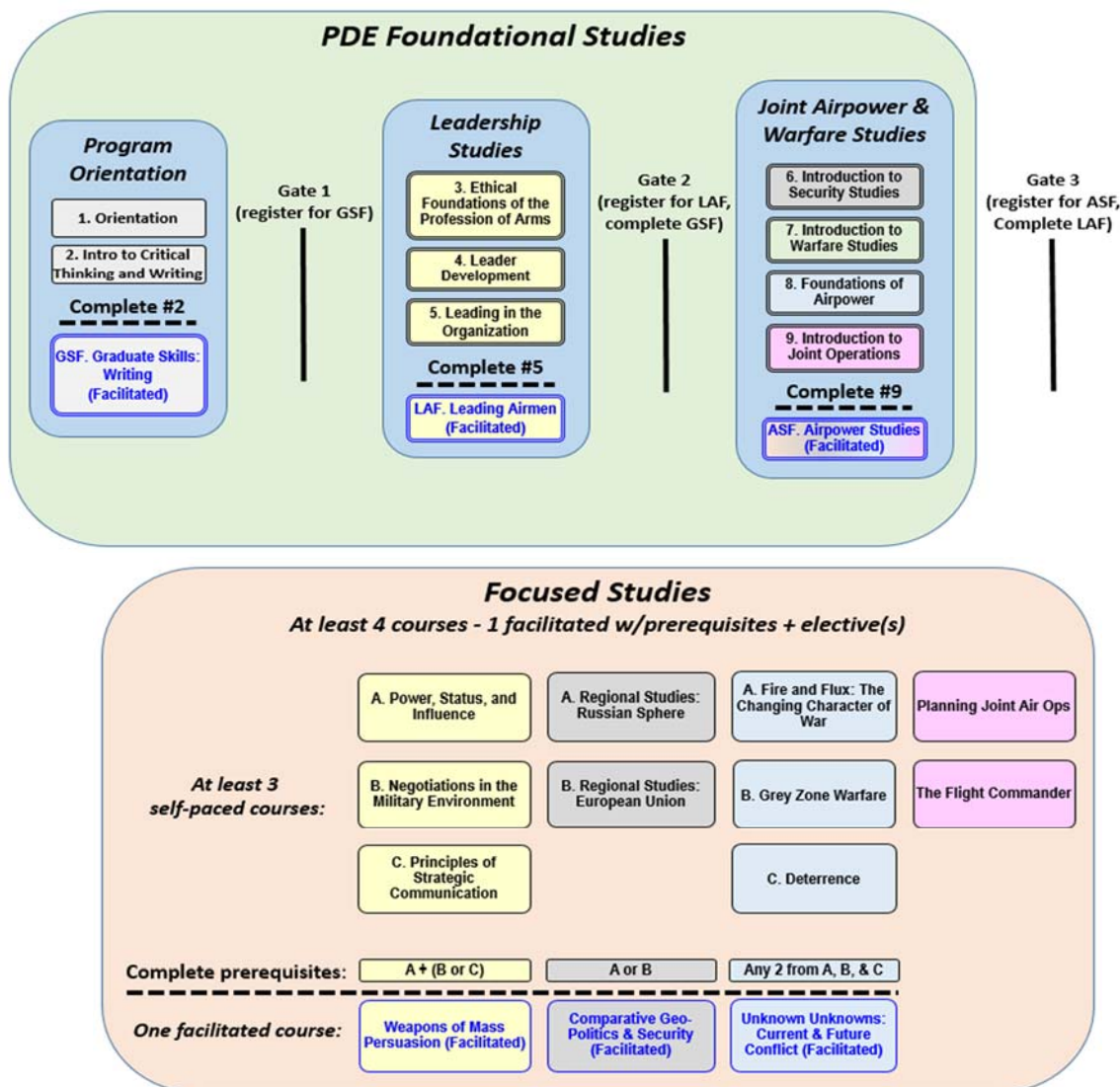

Figure 1. SOS DL 2.0 PDE Roadmap

Orientation Series:

Orientation (self-paced): Students gain familiarity with the SOS DL program, eSchool policies, the Blackboard® LMS, critical thinking skills, and Student Support Services. Students will also complete lessons on developing critical thinking and writing skills.

Introduction to Critical Thinking and Writing (self-paced): This course provides an introduction to critical thinking in which students learn the importance of developing a critical thinking mindset as well as various techniques for analyzing, evaluating, and presenting arguments. These techniques include identifying valid and invalid arguments and recognizing common cognitive biases and logical fallacies. Students will also review and practice writing skills necessary for communicating their ideas effectively.

Graduate Skills: Writing (Facilitated): This course is a writing diagnostic assessment in which students are given the tools and feedback necessary to successfully complete future writing assignments within the program.

Foundational Studies

The nine foundational studies courses apply to all students and are presented in two series. The first four courses make up the Leading Airmen Series. The next five courses are the Leadership Series. These courses must be completed in the order presented.

Leadership Studies Series:

Ethical Foundations of the Profession of Arms (self-paced): This course explores the moral foundations of the profession of arms through an examination of foundational documents, such as the Constitution and Oath of Office, and explains how professional military ethical obligations arise from these documents. The course further explores the military as a profession and its corresponding virtues and values. The course concludes with an introductory look at the just war tradition which provides the framework for thinking about when war may be morally justified and the moral conduct appropriate during war itself.

Leader Development (self-paced): This course offers students an opportunity to explore ways to mindfully develop their leadership skills. Students begin the course with introspection and subsequently explore key elements of leadership models, critical thinking, and decision-making. Students then apply leadership-course themes in developing a personal leadership development plan.

Leading in the Organization (self-paced): This course is designed to develop the foundational pillars that leaders need to effectively take care

of people and other critical resources. Students will understand how organizational culture, team development, dynamic followership, and change management are integral to successful leadership in a complex, resource-constrained environment. Furthermore, this course allows students the opportunity to reflect on their personal experiences and endeavors to explore how they might apply their personal leadership philosophy in an organizational setting.

Leading Airmen (facilitated): This capstone facilitated course requires students to apply critical-thinking, reflection, and interactive discussion to exploring the unique challenges of leading in a complex organizational environment. During this course, students will share personal, professional, historical, real-world and scenario-based leadership challenges and triumphs to explore commonalities and habits of mind.

Joint Airpower & Warfare Studies Series:

Introduction to Security Studies (self-paced): This course engages students with concepts in international relations, civil-military relations, and strategic guidance. The goal of this course is to expose junior leaders to the international community, the actors involved in international civil-military relations, and their role as military and civilian members of the Department of Defense. Primary topics include international relations paradigms, international actors (both state and non-state), instruments of national power (IOPs), domestic actors in the national security process and their authorities, and strategic guidance, tools, and thinking (including concepts in deterrence).

Introduction to Warfare Studies (self-paced): This course introduces the nature and character of war, examines the various levels of war, surveys the spectrum of military operations, and explores the operational environments where wars are fought. The course topics include the changing and unchanging aspects of war; the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of war; factors that complicate warfare such as morality and just war theories; conflict termination versus war termination; the spectrum of military operations/continuum of warfare, and the operational environments.

Foundations of Airpower (self-paced): This course explores the concept of airmindedness, and how it has driven the evolution of early airpower theories into a doctrine of Airpower employment, leading to an independent Air Force. It shows that from its inception, the Air Force has pursued a core group of enduring missions. Finally, the course illustrates how critical thinking and problem solving tools have been applied to air-centric problem sets.

Introduction to Joint Operations (self-paced): This course provides a basic overview of the challenges, capabilities, and processes related to

operating in the Joint environment. The course provides an introduction to the capabilities and limitations of Department of Defense Service components. It next examines factors which shape the employment of military forces, with an emphasis on airpower. The course introduces the Joint Functions as categories of operational thought and planning and exposes Airmen to the stakeholders and issues across the joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational (JIIM) environment. Finally, the course introduces the organization and presentation of airpower to the Joint Force Commander.

Airpower Studies (facilitated): This capstone facilitated course culminates an exploration of the Air Force "family business" in its context of international security, warfare, and joint operations. The course addresses selected themes from the self-paced content. Students will analyze the interrelationships among airpower, national security, warfare, and joint operations, identifying crucial issues concerning airpower roles and employment in those contexts.

Focused Studies

The focused courses are the first point in the program where students can tailor their PME experience to better meet their professional needs. Students must take a minimum of three self-paced and one facilitated course to complete the program:

Unknown Unknowns, Current and Future Conflict (facilitated): This capstone facilitated course culminates an exploration of the complexities of warfare, how it evolves, how it is fought, and how it can be deterred. The course addresses selected themes from the self-paced content. Students will analyze the interrelationships among deterrence, gray zone warfare, and the changing character of war identifying crucial issues concerning those contexts in the future.

Prerequisites: Students must successfully complete any two of the following courses; Fire and the Flux: The Changing Character of War, Gray Zone Warfare, or Deterrence in order to enroll in Unknown Unknowns, Current and Future Conflict (facilitated)

The Fire and the Flux (self-paced): This course explores the past, present, and possible future evolution of man's conception of war. The course threads together social, environmental, and technological changes through history to illustrate how they have interacted to continually change the character of warfare.

Deterrence (self-paced): The use of threat to prevent adversarial action is a fundamental construct in the United States' national strategy and merits serious thought. Although deterrence is widely associated with the threat of nuclear war, this course will explore deterrence principles across many domains including counterterrorism, space and cyberspace. Given

the lethality of modern weaponry, we live daily with the prospect that deterrence failure could result in mass destruction. It is especially important that participants in development and execution of national strategy become familiar with it.

Gray Zone Warfare (self-paced): The concept of conflict within the "Gray Zone" between Peace and War is not new, but it has recently found renewed interest within the current global order. This class will explore the concepts of Gray Zone conflicts, how they are understood, why they are fought, and the spectrum of forms they take. Attention will especially be given to the larger debates around their definition, their intersections with hybrid threats, and current examples of Gray Zone threats.

Comparative Global Politics & Security (facilitated): Comparative Global Politics and Security is a facilitated course that will walk students through some of the foundational issues within the global system that sustain or resolve regional security issues. Students will engage in comparative discussions of these factors such as political, socio-cultural, and economic structures across regions and the effects these have in shaping regional and global security issues**.**

Prerequisites: Students must successfully complete one of the following regional studies self-paced courses (European Union, Russian Sphere) to enroll in the Comparative Global Politics and Security facilitated course.

Regional Studies: European Union (self-paced): This course covers the development of the European Union and the challenges it faces as it attempts to become a global player. The course begins with an overview of the history of the EU before proceeding to the challenges that the EU is facing. Understanding the European Union will assist students in planning and conducting operations with the European Union and operations based in the European Union

Regional Studies: Russian Sphere (self-paced): This course provides students with an overview of Russian history, the significant changes in her governing institutions, and the inherent and immediate regional and global challenges regarding Russian national interests and foreign policy. Students will understand the structural conditions that precipitated the Russian Revolution, the ideologies and policies which drove the Soviet system, and the dynamics that fractured the Union. Finally, informed by the dramatic and turbulent past, students will conceptualize the cotemporary Russian security situation, and relations between Russia and the world.

Weapons of Mass Persuasion (facilitated): This capstone facilitated course builds on the concepts of power, status, and influence with an understanding of strategic communication and negotiation processes in a military context. Students will demonstrate their understanding of how leaders benefit from a firm grasp of these concepts and how strategic communication and negotiating skills

can complement each other to further a leader's effectiveness in accomplishing the mission.

Prerequisites: Students must successfully complete the Power, Status and Influence course and one of the following (Negotiations in the Military Environment or Principles of Strategic Communications) in order to enroll in Weapons of Mass Persuasion.

> **Power, Status, and Influence (self-paced):** Power, status, and influence are key organizing processes in groups from small teams to large organizations. This course summarizes research on the basis of power, status, and influence, how they relate to each other, how to grow them, and how they increase leadership effectiveness. Students will gain a better understanding of dynamics within their own organization and how to leverage this understanding to become a more effective leader.

> **Negotiations in the Military Environment (self-paced):** This course introduces basic negotiation theory and its utility in the military context. It provides an overview of proven negotiations concepts and fundamental models. Students will employ interactive DL tools to reinforce those concepts.

> **Principles of Strategic Communications (self-paced):** This course explores the concept of Strategic Communication and its importance in today's VUCA environment. Students will learn why Strategic Communication matters, its relationship to Information Operations, as well as its purpose and processes. Students will also explore ways that they can become better listeners, and how to influence behavior in a target audience. With a focus on Social Media, students will learn how communication plays a role in the "War of Ideas," especially as it relates to combating terrorism.

Electives: In addition to any of the self-paced courses listed as prerequisites above, students may also choose to complete one of the courses below to fulfill the three self-paced course requirement of the Focused Studies series.

> **The Flight Commander (self-paced):** This course explores the day-to-day duties of a typical Flight Commander to help prepare students for this critical role. Students will learn concepts related to common Flight Commander responsibilities and expectations, such as leading and facilitating in their organization. Topics also highlight the importance of Flight Commanders' duties, to include administrative and operational responsibilities.

> **Planning Joint Air Operations (self-paced):** This course covers operational air planning from strategic guidance through Air Tasking Order production and execution. It examines the JFACC's role in guidance and prioritization, and how the AOC translates that guidance

into plans and effects. Finally, the course includes detailed study of the Joint Operational Planning Process for Air (JOPPA); air targeting; the Joint Air tasking Cycle (JATC) cycle; rules of engagement (ROE) and collateral damage considerations; and airpower-related doctrinal issues and friction points.

1.3.2. SCHEDULING

Throughout the SOS DL program students must take the courses sequentially, completing one before signing up for the next. There is an exception to this rule for course sign-ups. Once students finish the prerequisites and sign up for the facilitated course and while waiting for the facilitated course to start, they may also sign up for self-paced courses in the next series. This will allow those students to begin work on the self-paced course while waiting for the facilitated course to begin. Students should only take one self-paced course at a time while waiting for a facilitated course to begin.

Student are allowed up to 4 months to complete each self-paced course. Students who do not complete a self-paced course, including all self-progress checks and deliverables, within 4 months will be automatically removed from the course and must re-enroll through AUSIS at their convenience to re-take that entire course. No partial credit will be given.

The facilitated courses are offered periodically based on student demand. Students must plan ahead and sign up for the facilitated course of their choice by the registration deadline posted on the schedule (~2 ½ weeks prior to the class start date). Be forewarned: students on a tight timeline to complete the program must pay close attention to the course registration deadlines as failure to meet registration deadlines will delay progress through the program while waiting for subsequent course offerings.

Instructors are allotted up to 10 calendar days to post final course grades once the course ends. Please note that grades and enrollments may take up to 24 hours to transmit between AUSIS and Blackboard®.

Program Timeline: A student can complete the program in about 6-8 months or less by accomplishing the Graduate Skills course in one month and taking 1-2 months for each of the remaining self-paced courses. The eSchool recognizes that completing the program in a reasonable amount of time may be infeasible for some students due to deployments, TDYs, moves, command tours, life issues, etc. If students encounter extenuating life events that preclude them from completing a course on time, submit a help ticket to Student Services.

Check the *PDE Announcements* module on the Blackboard® "SOS DL Home" tab to obtain the latest information on updates, and changes to the program. Additionally, individual courses will include an *Announcements* section to disseminate course-specific information.

1.3.3 PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Program Completion Requirements: Students are required to have successfully completed the following classes with a grade of Passing, SATISFACTORY or higher.

> Orientation Program (two self-paced and one facilitated)
>
> The 4-course Leadership Studies Series (three self-paced and one facilitated)
>
> The 5-course Joint Airpower & Warfare Studies Series (four self-paced and one facilitated)
>
> Focused Studies Series (three self-paced and one facilitated)

Student progression can be tracked via AUSIS. A student is considered in "good standing" when a student is actively enrolled, has not exceeded the program's timeline and has not accumulated more than two UNSATISFACTORY grades throughout the program. Students placed on administrative suspension, or disenrollment (i.e., course failure, disciplinary reasons, low academic grade total, academic integrity violations, etc.) are considered not in good standing.

Exams, assessments, and self-progress checks are some of the methods used for assessing student competency (understanding and synthesis) of course materials. Self-paced foundational and focused studies courses use a variety of methods including progress checks and writing assignments. The written assignments from the self-paced courses will be utilized in the facilitated course for that series. Facilitated courses also use a variety of assignment types including threaded-discussion questions to gauge understanding and application of the material and typically use written essays as the final exam. The higher levels of cognitive learning require in-depth knowledge and, consequently, a different kind of preparation for exams that go beyond simply memorizing course materials. In general, the rubrics for all assignments—threaded discussions, essays of various types, and final examinations—all focus on course content, critical thinking, and communications skills as the major components for determining academic achievement. The "Support Center" tab on Blackboard® provides resources on "Studying," "Thinking" and "Writing" to help prepare for these assessments.

Students must ensure adequate preparation for each assessment, as multiple failures will result in course suspension and possible program disenrollment.

As defined in Air University Instruction (AUI) 36-2609, all SOS DL assessments are considered individual work and students are expected to complete exams without collaborating with others, except as indicated in lesson or course instructions.

1.4 DESCRIPTION AND ROLES

1.4.1. SOS DL 2.0 - PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Apply critical-thinking and communication skills to address contemporary military issues.

- Understand the moral foundation of military service and how this informs ethical leadership in the profession of arms.

- Apply leadership theories and models to the practice of leading teams/units in complex, dynamic, and ambiguous tactical environments.

- Understand the historical context of military and airpower theory, and how these inform the employment of joint forces in the international security environment.

- Analyze how airpower contributes to military operations in the joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational (JIIM) environment, in support of national security aims.

- Comprehend concepts (theories, models, analytical frameworks, etc.) and issues relevant to the military profession.

1.4.2. DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION (DE) CREDIT

Upon completion of the SOS DL program, all USAF officers will earn Primary Developmental Education credit. USN, USA, or USMC students must contact respective service's Professional Military Education office for more information on the transfer of approved educational credit. Civilians must contact their personnel office to ensure their records are updated to reflect graduation status.

1.4.3. USAFR & ANG STUDY HOURS / RESERVE POINTS

Air National Guard and Air Reserve component officers receive reserve retirement credit points based on SOS DL program completion and its respective contact hours. Students should download a copy of their "Study Hours" from AUSIS and forward to their Unit Training Officer for award of retirement points. The Air Reserve Personnel Center (ARPC) determines and records Reserve and Guard retirement points. HQ ARPC/DDPPKB is the sole authority for awarding these points (DSN 926-6012 or toll free 1-800-525-0102 ext. x71285). For all Guard, Reserve or IMA questions regarding Air Force PME, please contact ARPC via email at rmg.dpt@us.af.mil with your request. It is the responsibility of the individual reservist (student) to ensure records are updated, as well as, the accuracy of his/her reservist's point accrual balance.

1.4.4. METHODS OF STUDY

SOS DL 2.0 is designed as a combination of self-study and instructor-facilitated courses using digital curriculum delivered through the https://au.blackboard.com website.

1.4.5. STUDENT ROLE

As a SOS DL 2.0 student, you are responsible for completing this program utilizing the eSchool online curriculum contained on the Blackboard® LMS, with eSchool faculty and staff support. Your goals, preparation, and pacing will directly affect what you take away from your SOS DL experience. Your goals will set the tone for everything you do and provide a personal milestone for measuring your progress. Academic preparation will enable you to critically analyze course materials and successfully complete each competency assessment. We urge you to take advantage of the multitude of tools available to you within Blackboard®. There is a multitude of resources available on the au.blackboard.com website in the "Support Center" tab within the "Resources" module. These resources include advice and resources dealing with studying, thinking, writing, library resources and even Blackboard® tutorials. These resources will help ensure you gain the most from this program.

While a feature of the new DL program is student-to-student collaboration and peer-to-peer review, each student in the program is required to complete his/her own assigned work, as indicated in lesson instructions; participate and contribute to group projects and threaded discussions, as applicable by the course instructions and course-instructor direction; and, abide by all facets of academic integrity as outlined in AUI 36-2609, *Academic Integrity,* 2 April 2012.

2. STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

2.1. ENROLLMENT/WITHDRAWAL/DISENROLLMENT

2.1.1. COURSE ENROLLMENT

During initial enrollment and throughout the program, it is the student's responsibility to ensure AUSIS reflects both the correct email address and the correct name. Email is our primary means of communication. The name data in AUSIS is used to update your personnel records to reflect program graduation. Misspelling or use of nicknames will cause an error between the AU systems and the AFPC MILPDS.

Your initial enrollment into the Graduate Skills course occurs automatically once you have successfully registered for the SOS DL program on AUSIS. Students are not automatically enrolled in subsequent courses but rather are given the freedom to enroll based upon their personal and professional schedules.

Enrollment in each self-paced course is a 1-step process. Please review the *Directions for Enrollment and Registration* posted in the *Announcements* on the AUSIS program homepage located at https://ausis.maxwell.af.mil/ (click on the Squadron Officer School icon). Once you have enrolled in a self-paced course in AUSIS, the system may take up to 24 hours to synch with Blackboard®, process the enrollment, and display the course material in your account.

Enrollment in facilitated courses is a 2-step process. In AUSIS, you must first enroll in a course and then you must click on *Select Group* to select the date that you want to attend. If you do not select a group, you will not be placed into a course. Please review the *Directions for Enrollment and Registration* posted in the *Announcements* on the AUSIS program homepage.

2.1.2. COURSE WITHDRAWAL

Students can withdraw from a facilitated course prior to the registration deadline in AUSIS by clicking on the blue *Group* hyperlink and selecting a new date. After the registration deadline, students need to submit a help ticket to Student Services through the Support Center tab in Blackboard® with the following information: full name/rank and course from which to be withdrawn.

NOTE: Students who withdraw from a facilitated course on or after the course start date will receive an UNSATISFACTORY grade for that course. See paragraph 2.2 for additional information regarding unsatisfactory grades.

2.1.3. PROGRAM WITHDRAWAL

To withdraw from the SOS DL 2.0 program, submit a help ticket to Student Services through the Support Center tab in Blackboard® by providing the following information: full name/rank; last 4 of Social Security Number; effective date of withdrawal; course(s) currently enrolled; service component (Active Duty/Guard/Reserve/Civilian, and, if other than Air Force, Service); reason for withdrawing from the program.

2.1.4. DISENROLLMENT

Disenrollment may be a) voluntary (Without Prejudice), b) disciplinary (With or Without Prejudice) or c) for unacceptable academic performance (With or Without Prejudice). With or Without Prejudice determinations are made IAW with AU policy. "Without Prejudice" disenrollments result in temporary student dismissal from the SOS DL program, but the student may request re-enrollment. "With Prejudice" disenrollments result in complete student dismissal from the current and all future AU SOS programs.

Automatic disenrollment notifications are sent via AUSIS for students who have a course failure. These disenrollments are considered "Without Prejudice."

Students who were disenrolled "Without Prejudice" may request re-enrollment into the program once their disenrollment circumstances are adjudicated. Adjudication requirements may include *Course-Director directed study*, additional required academic work outside of the SOS DL curriculum, or other mandated actions that must be accomplished prior to re-enrollment. These actions are documented in the students' AUSIS record or during the *Formal Academic Probation/Suspension* feedback process. Re-enrollments may require students to start the program completely over in order to ensure the most current program objectives are met by the student.

Re-enrollment for course failures and other "Without Prejudice" disenrollments requires the student to login to AUSIS and re-enroll in the course or submit a Help Ticket to Student Services by using the "Support Center" tab in Blackboard®. The ticket must include all the actions the student has taken to rectify his/her circumstance and any required actions he/she was directed to take in accordance with the *Probation/Suspension/Review* process. The re-enrollment will be validated by Student Services prior to a student being re-enrolled.

2.2. STANDARDS

2.2.1. GRADING

Self-Paced: SOS DL 2.0 contains self-paced courses where students are assessed through multiple choice progress checks. Students must pass each progress check with at least an 80%. Self-paced courses within each of the series contain writing assignments. These assignments may be evaluated as part of the series. To complete the self-paced courses students must certify they have completed all the required writing assignments. However, those assignments will not be reviewed by an instructor until the "Facilitated" course for that series.

For self-paced courses without an assessment mechanism, overall course grade will be assigned according to the following scale. A course grade of Satisfactory is required to successfully complete the course.

Grade	Score	Final Grade Conversion
Satisfactory	75 – 100	S
Unsatisfactory	0 – 74.99	U

Facilitated: SOS DL 2.0 contains instructor-facilitated courses where students participate in threaded discussions, group projects, and collaborate with fellow students. Requirements are detailed in the individual course instructions, but generally, standardized rubrics (scoring tools for assessments) are provided to all course instructors teaching in the facilitated courses to provide a standardized feedback format to each student and to ensure common learning outcomes are understood and obtained. Students can view a course's grading rubric(s) by clicking on "My Course Grades" on the left course menu of Blackboard®.

For facilitated courses, individual assignments and overall course grades will be assigned according to the following scale. A course grade of Satisfactory, or higher, is required to successfully complete the course.

Grade	Score	Final Grade Conversion
Outstanding	96% – 100%	O
Excellent	90% – 95.9%	E
Satisfactory	75% – 89.9%	S
Unsatisfactory	50% – 74.9%	U
Not Acceptable	0% – 49.9%	N

2.2.2. GRADE APPEALS

Course Instructors (CIs) assign a grade in the facilitated courses to each assessment according to the student's demonstrated mastery of the objectives being evaluated. CIs submit compiled grades for their course(s) via Blackboard® during the grade-submission window. Students who wish to obtain further explanation or review of a grade from the course instructor may initiate an appeal through their CI (see Attachment 1 for *Grade Appeal Form*). Students must wait at least one business day after grades are posted before initiating a grade appeal and have up to three business days to initiate an appeal. After three business days, no student may begin a grade appeal. In the event the CI is unavailable, students should initiate their grade appeal with the applicable Course Director (CD). Documented evidence must be submitted to support an appeal and must accompany the Grade Appeal Form (see Attachment 1). CIs/CDs will review appeals for grade changes and respond to students within 6 working days of receipt of the Grade Appeal Application Form and documented evidence. A second appeal is permitted with additional justification and is forwarded to the Curriculum Department Chair (or equivalent) for review after being coordinated through the CI/CD. Appeals are only accepted for individual graded assignments. There is no appeal for final course grades. The Dean is the final approval authority for final course grades. Once approved, the grades are made available to students via the AU Portal, subject to the results of any grade-appeal process.

2.2.3. ADMINISTRATIVE SUSPENSION

If a student signs up for a facilitated course and then does not attend or satisfactorily complete the course, the student will receive an UNSATISFACTORY grade. Upon receiving three UNSATISFACTORY grades in the program, the student will be placed on administrative suspension. See Suspension Chart below. After serving the suspension period, a suspended student must petition to be reinstated by submitting a letter of request endorsed by the student's chain of command, addressed to the "Dean, eSchool of Graduate PME," explaining any extraordinary circumstances that justified the performance which resulted in the unsatisfactory grades. The endorsement letter

must include a statement that the individual has been counseled on the importance of taking the facilitated courses seriously, to avoid wasting the money invested by the US Government on these courses. Students who are suspended will not be readmitted into the program until this action is accomplished. If a student has been suspended multiple times, the Dean, eSchool of Graduate PME, may consider permanently dismissing the student from the program.

UNSATs	Suspension Chart
1st Suspension 3 UNSATs	The 1st suspension period is 2 months before students can re-enroll. A suspended student must petition to be reinstated by submitting a letter of request, endorsed by his/her immediate supervisor.
2nd Suspension Re-admitted student receives another UNSAT (4 total)	The 2nd suspension period is 4 Months and the level of endorsement goes up to the student's squadron commander (or equivalent).
3rd Suspension Re-admitted for a 2nd time and receives another UNSAT (5 total)	The 3rd suspension period is 6 Months before students can re-enroll and the level of endorsement goes up to the first O-6 (or equivalent) and Dean of eSchool may consider permanently dismissing the student from the program.
Re-admitted for a 3rd time and receives another UNSAT (6 total)	If readmitted again and student receives another UNSAT (6 UNSATs total), the student may be permanently dismissed from the program.
PLEASE NOTE:	• A student may withdraw from a course prior to the registration deadline without penalty. • Request for exceptions to policy must be endorsed by O-6 in student's chain of command and the approval authority is the Dean of eSchool

Figure 2. SOS DL Suspension Chart

2.3. PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR

Air University (AU) expects its students, as professionals, to be fully committed to their personal and professional development and to take full advantage of their admission to the SOS DL program. Student conduct that disrupts the successful achievement of the AU mission is not permitted. Students whose unprofessional or inappropriate conduct disrupts course activities may be subject to punitive action, ranging from a reduction in the course grade to permanent dismissal from the program. Course instructors and faculty members have authority to determine what is and is not acceptable conduct. Instructors noting incidents of unprofessional behavior will notify the course director and Director of Student Services for inquiry and action. Any student who is undergoing review or investigative proceedings related to unprofessional conduct or academic misconduct may be placed in an administrative hold status. While in this status, the student will not be allowed to enroll in any courses until the proceeding is fully resolved and a course of action is determined.

2.3.1. ATTENDANCE

All facilitated courses are conducted asynchronously, so while "attendance" is mandatory, there are no specified times during the day when students must be active in the course. However, students are expected to meet minimum participation requirements in all class activities and complete all class assignments by the assignment due dates.

As a reminder, students may withdraw from facilitated courses prior to the course start date. Withdrawals or Drops on or after the start date will result in an UNSATISFACTORY grade. Facilitated courses represent a substantial investment by the US Air Force in the student's development; professional courtesy and proper use of US Government resources demand a similar investment by the student.

2.3.2. ACADEMIC FREEDOM

All students must adhere to academic freedom and non-attribution policies as described in AU Instruction 36-2608, *Academic Freedom*. The SOS DL program may include candid lectures and articles from senior leaders across the Department of Defense as well as speakers from US Government agencies and from the civilian sector. These presenters consent to distribute their presentations because they are assured their comments will be shared only among participating students, instructors, and faculty. Students in the SOS DL program must respect and protect the confidentiality of these speakers' presentations. It is important to note that students are not allowed to attribute any materials contained in the courseware to persons or entities outside of the eSchool of Graduate PME without permission from AU. Similarly, students shall respect the contributions of classmates and guests who might participate in their online sessions. Explanatory notes on AU's academic freedom policy follow:

1. Academic freedom allows students, guest speakers, contributing authors, and participants in established classes to state opinions openly and to support or challenge ideas without concern their remarks will be attributed to them.

2. Non-attribution facilitates the free expression of opinions and ideas and allows for professional disagreements within the context of an academically stimulating environment. Essentially, non-attribution means not associating specific comments, ideas, opinions, or conversations with specific individuals.

3. Although individuals may debate relevant issues, academic freedom must be tempered by good judgment to refrain from making offensive remarks, unfounded opinions, or irresponsible statements either verbally or in writing. Offensive remarks or irresponsible statements include comments disparaging any person's race, color, national origin, ethnic group, religion, or sex. Offensive remarks or irresponsible statements –

whether oral or written –will not be tolerated.

Individuals who violate the academic freedom policy are subject to adverse administrative and/or disciplinary actions as described in AUI 36-2608, *Academic Freedom.*

2.3.3. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Integrity is a cornerstone of the military profession and permeates every aspect of military service. Within this academic environment, integrity is important to ensure graduates are skilled in the areas prescribed by joint and Air Force directives and to preserve the validity of the SOS DL assessment program. AU Instruction 36-2609, *Academic Integrity,* defines academic integrity as "uncompromising adherence to a code of ethics, morality, conduct, scholarship, and other values related to academic activity." Every student enrolled in the SOS DL program is responsible for adhering to this standard. Students are warned that having knowledge of a violation and failing to report it is also a violation of academic integrity.

Students found guilty of academic integrity violations are subject to sanctions imposed by AU. These sanctions can affect student credit for completed work as well as a student's eligibility for future PME and academic opportunities.

Collaboration and discussion in the facilitated courses among students in the same seminar are highly encouraged, but each student is expected to do his/her own work. It is a breach of integrity to use, receive, or give work to another student outside of a particular course.

ORIGINAL WORK:

Student work submitted for grade must be composed solely by the student (or identified group of students for a group assignment) except where clearly documented in accordance with citation requirements, and the work must be composed specifically for the current assignment. No work previously submitted in any other course or academic / PME program will be resubmitted or reformatted, in whole or in part, for submission in a current assignment without prior written approval of the course instructor. Additionally, students are prohibited from using the work of other students (current or former) in any way, to include the formulation of ideas or outlines, to complete assignments.

The act of appropriating, or stealing, the literary composition of another, or parts or passages of another's writings, ideas or language, and passing them off as one's own work constitutes plagiarism. Every student must ensure quotations or paraphrased passages are properly cited within ALL written work submitted.

To assist students and instructors in identifying potential acts of plagiarism, the SOS DL program uses SafeAssign®. This commercial tool

identifies areas of written work that are common in other documents in its database and thereby require proper sourcing. In the eOrientation course, students and instructors complete a short tutorial that explains how to use this valuable tool. eSchool of Graduate PME policy allows students to submit their work to SafeAssign® at least once prior to submitting the work as final through SafeAssign® to their CIs. All essay and paper assignments are required to be submitted through SafeAssign®.

CHEATING:

Cheating is the act of giving or receiving improper assistance such as, but not limited to:

- Uploading and/or downloading study aids or notes (also known as "dirty purples," "gouge," or "the pony") to or from websites; or providing or receiving such notes via any other method

- Copying material from another student's assessment

- Using notes and issued materials, or other references not authorized for use during an assessment, or other assigned work

- Knowingly permitting another to copy work or presentation materials, or excerpts/ideas/answers from an assessment

- Collaborating with other persons on individual assignments, except where permitted

- Sharing study materials or any assessment information after completing an assessment. This is to preserve the integrity of the assessment and ensure that all students have an equal opportunity at success in the program

Cheating is a violation of academic integrity standards. Further, unauthorized discussion, disclosure, or possession of assessment materials constitutes a violation of Article 92 of the UCMJ. Unless instructed otherwise by an eSchool faculty or staff member, assessment materials may be discussed only with CIs and eSchool faculty.

Individuals who violate the academic integrity policy are subject to adverse administrative and or disciplinary actions as described in AETC Instruction 36-2909.

2.3.4. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND TREATMENT

SEXUAL HARASSMENT:

As a military institution, AU upholds the highest standards of professional and personal conduct at all times. Individuals must be treated with dignity and respect. Any form of sexual discrimination or mistreatment will not be tolerated. Sexual harassment is forbidden and beneath the dignity of

military officers and civilians.

AU's goal is to maintain an environment free from sexual harassment. No one may make sexual comments to another person. Such comments are NOT protected by Academic Freedom. In addition to not engaging in this behavior themselves, students, CIs, and faculty share an obligation to inform the chain of command if they are aware of comments considered sexual harassment.

TOLERANCE AND DIVERSITY:

Ethnic or racial jokes, slurs, or mistreatment are discriminatory, are not acceptable, and will not be tolerated in any AU course. This applies to all communications, spoken or written. As with sexual harassment, this behavior is NOT protected by Academic Freedom, and anyone aware of such behavior is responsible for reporting it to proper authorities.

2.3.5. ELECTRONIC MAIL AND THREADED DISCUSSION DECORUM

Students are expected to use common sense and good judgment when using email, Blackboard's® message system, discussion boards, and forums.   *Note: for documentation purposes, messages (including any associated attachments/files) and all threaded discussion transmissions are automatically monitored, tracked, recorded, and archived.*

The Discussion boards and message system are not the correct forum for venting grievances or complaints. Students have the ability to provide suggestions for improvements to administrative, programmatic, or curriculum-related policies, procedures, or other SOS DL program-related issues using student surveys.

CHAIN OF COMMAND:

In SOS DL 2.0 facilitated courses, the CI is the primary focal point for all student matters. Students are instructed not to circumvent their chain of command by communicating directly with higher levels without first coordinating with their CI. If the CI is the problem, students should contact the Course Director.

OFFICIAL VERSUS PERSONAL COMMUNICATION:

Blackboard's® message system is for official communication only. eSchool instructors, faculty, and students are restricted from using this system for personal gain (i.e., advertising for sale of goods or services, etc.) or for personal communications unrelated to the educational program for which it was purchased.

2.3.6. FRATERNIZATION AND UNPROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships are deemed unprofessional, whether pursued on- or off-duty, when they detract from the authority of superiors or result in, or reasonably create the appearance of, favoritism, misuse of office or position, or the abandonment of organizational goals for personal interests. Fraternization is an aggravated form of unprofessional relationship and is recognized as a violation of Article 134 of the UCMJ. Air Force Instruction (AFI) 36-2909, *Professional and Unprofessional Relationships*, provides specific guidance related to training and educational situations. Specific to the academic environment, AF policy advises against any personal relationships between CIs and students in a PME environment.

2.3.7. INFORMATION PROTECTION

COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL:

Do not reproduce copyrighted documents in whole or in part without permission from the eSchool of Graduate PME. Dissemination of copyrighted material is not authorized (i.e., selling the material, providing material to a commercial company for use). All copyrighted material conforms to the copyright laws of the United States and may not be further reproduced in whole or in part without the express permission of the copyright holder.

PRIVACY OF INFORMATION:

The Privacy Act imposes civil and criminal penalties for disclosing personal information from a "system of records" to someone not entitled to that information. "Systems of records" include personnel records, medical records, and other official records that are retrieved by an individual's name, social security number, or other personal identifier. Therefore, the use of Blackboard's® message system to distribute home addresses, home telephone numbers, number and sex of dependents, home of record, age, date of birth, and other personal information without first getting the consent of the subject is prohibited. If consent is requested and received, it is important to ensure any electronic correspondence reflects the fact that approval was received from the subject. Posting your own information implies your consent; this does not extend to family members – their consent must be documented and stated.

FOREIGN DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION:

Air Force Policy Directive 16-2, *Disclosure of Military Information to Foreign Governments and International Organizations*, states that disclosure of information, documents, or training materials to foreign governments or international organizations is not allowed unless approved

by the Secretary of the Air Force/International Affairs Disclosure (SAF/IAD) section. In accordance with this policy, the eSchool of Graduate PME educational materials (including syllabi, instructional narratives, multimedia presentations, and all interactive communications that are part of the SOS DL program) may not be distributed to foreign visitors without expressed approval coordinated through SAF/IAD via the eSchool of Graduate PME and the AU Foreign Disclosure Office. Refer inquiries on such information or documents to your CI who will submit a request for approval through the Director of Student Services to AU and SAF/IAD.

INFORMATION SECURITY IN PROFESSIONAL PAPERS:

Student papers and reports must be written at the unclassified level. In some cases, a compilation of unclassified sources could result in a classified report/paper. If a student has doubts as to whether information is classified or releasable, they are instructed to contact a USAF security manager prior to uploading the document onto the Blackboard® system. **In no instance** will students place information on the SOS DL Blackboard® website that has the potential to be classified or could be of possible intelligence value. This includes sensitive or restricted types of information such as "For Official Use Only" information and proprietary information.

3. RESOURCES

3.1. INFORMATION AND LIBRARY SERVICES

Air University's Muir S. Fairchild Research Information Center (the "MSFRIC" – also known as the Air University Library) promotes the use of library technology and resources, teaches library research classes, and provides access to a variety of library resources. Students can access a variety of MSFRIC services online by selecting the "Support Center" tab, scrolling down and then clicking on the "Library" icon. Use the link to "How to Search MSFRIC Resources" for a detailed explanation and suggested process for conducting your research.

3.2. WRITING RESOURCES

For writing assistance, self-paced writing guides and tutorials are provided on the https://au.blackboard.com website both in the *Graduate Skills Course* as well as in the "Support Center" tab by scrolling down to and clicking on the "Writing" icon.

4. STUDENT SUPPORT – INTERACTION WITH INSTRUCTORS AND FACULTY

4.1. STUDENT REGISTRATION SYSTEM

Students are required to ensure their contact information (contained in the student registration system database) is kept current. Students can initiate changes to their contact information using the AU Portal at https://auportal.maxwell.af.mil/. This step is vital to facilitating timely communication between the students and eSchool faculty.

4.2. SELF-PACED COURSES

Student Services is your primary point of contact for self-paced courses. They can assist with your technical issues and basic course questions. If your issue requires specific subject matter expertise, they will forward your help ticket to the course director who will then contact you with guidance on the issue.

4.3. FACILITATED COURSES

Course Instructors (CIs) are the leaders in the online classroom environment. Credentialed experts in their fields of study, they are selected, trained, and assigned to:

- Provide clarification and assistance to students

- Help students achieve desired levels of learning

- Assess student performance

- Provide substantive, qualitative feedback to improve both student performance and the program itself

- Personally observe students' online "classroom" interaction, helping them to meet course requirements while maintaining a supportive, professional online learning environment

- Be solely responsible for instruction and student evaluation, but consult with appointed academic advisors to assist students placed on academic probation

- Assist or refer students to Student Services for help with administrative matters

CIs provide specific guidance for their classes; however, the information in this handbook applies to all courses and students in the program. Student Services is your primary point of contact for registration into the facilitated courses.

4.4. TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Throughout this program you may require assistance on a variety of issues. As stated above, if you are in a facilitated courses, contact your instructor first, and if the instructor cannot resolve the issue, contact Student Services.

Student Services can help if you experience technical issues, issues with course content (self-paced only), and questions regarding enrollment, dis-enrollment, program eligibility, grades, or withdrawing from a course. You can contact eSchool Student Services by opening a help ticket. To open a help ticket go to the "Support Center" tab in Blackboard® and click on the "Help Ticket" icon or open the AU Education Support Center webpage at www.aueducationsupport.com and click on Request Support. Enter your contact information and ticket description. Fill out the "Ticket Description" as described below and click "finish" when complete. Note: Neither the eSchool nor AU handles issues pertaining to the Air Force Portal.

- User Type: Current Student

- Organization: eSchool GPME

- Program: Select the program in which you are enrolled

- Course: Select the course in which you are currently enrolled

- Request Type: Student Services

- Request Type Detail: Select appropriate response

- Problem Details: Provide a complete description of the problem or issue

4.5. SURVEYS

Surveys generally come in two forms: End-of-Course, and End-of-Program. At the end of each course, and upon completion of the entire program, students have an opportunity to provide feedback on the course content (including assessments), instructor, student services, and technical support. Candid and constructive comments are used to improve the SOS DL program.

4.6. STUDENT RIGHTS

Over and above any rights of appeal or filing of grievances and complaints as described in previous sections of this student handbook, any AU student has a right to appeal adverse actions taken against him/her by following the appropriate course of appeal as described in the Air University Catalog, available at http://www.airuniversity.af.mil/.

4.7 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

4.7.1. ONLINE SERVICES

AUSIS is your interface for student administration (i.e., program enrollment, course registration and grades). If the correct email address is loaded into AUSIS, then you will receive emails regarding program enrollment notifications, course grades and other administrative details.

Squadron Officer College Blackboard® is your primary interface for SOS DL 2.0 courses. Additionally, program announcements are posted on the "SOS DL

Home" tab of Blackboard® and course announcements will be posted in individual course home pages. Finally, if the correct email address is loaded in Blackboard®, then you will receive e-mails regarding events within individual courses.

4.7.2. PERSONNEL RECORD UPDATES

AUSIS automatically updates the Air University Registrar Education Program Management system (AUREPM) with PME completion data, which, in turn, updates the Military Personnel Data System (MilPDS), and, subsequently, officer records. You are responsible to ensure that your "Service Component" is correct in your AU Portal and AUSIS student record. Your personnel records should reflect that you have completed PDE within seven business days after all requirements are met and your instructor posts your final course grade. Guard/Reserve students must coordinate with ARPC to ensure retirement points based on study hours are correctly assigned/updated. The eSchool provides the study hours required to complete the SOS DL program and updates Blackboard® and the AU catalog as required to reflect current hours.

4.7.3. COMPLETION CERTIFICATES

The AU Registrar office provides certificates for SOS DL program. These certificates are typically printed and mailed each Wednesday with delivery usually within 7-10 duty days CONUS, 4-6 weeks for overseas. If you have not received your certificate within 30 days of your course completion date or you need a replacement certificate, submit a support ticket to the AU Education Support site at (www.aueducationsupport.com) and select the AU Registrar. You must include your full name, rank, last four SSN, current mailing address, course number/title, and date you completed the course.

4.7.4. IT CHALLENGES

In an effort to secure our military networks, changes in network configurations and modifications to hardware and software are made on a continual basis. We have experienced situations where networks are disabled (at the service, MAJCOM, or base level) and software does not work as desired. The eSchool of Graduate PME continuously works these issues on behalf of our world-wide student population, but has no control over changes to the military networks. We rely on you to make us aware of any problems. If you have specific issues at your base, submit a help ticket via the Student Services Support System providing a detailed description, to include screen shots if applicable. If available, it may be more advantageous to use a home computer to complete some of your academic requirements.

4.7.5. AIR UNIVERSITY REGISTRAR

The Registrar is responsible for creating and forwarding transcripts in response to student and academic institution requests. The Registrar also serves as the AU liaison to Educational Service Officers worldwide.

Program Transcripts: The Registrar will furnish a transcript upon receipt of your written request. The request can also be made by accessing the education support website at http://www.aueducationsupport.com and selecting "AU Transcript Request" from the top menu bar.

ATTACHMENT 1 - GRADE APPEAL FORM

AIR UNIVERSITY eSchool of Graduate PME
SOS DL PROGRAM

Students wishing to appeal a grade must review paragraph 2.2.2, Grade Appeal, before proceeding with the process.

A grade appeal must be supported by documented evidence. The documented evidence will be a concise written summary of the student's position, including relevant facts, desired resolution, arguments supporting the desired solution, and relevant supporting documentation. The evidence should be attached to the Grade Appeal Form, be no more than two pages, and e-mailed/faxed to the instructor. ***Note: The burden of proof in a grade dispute lies with the student.***

The instructor will review the student's appeal, provide comments, and submit it to the Course Director for adjudication within 24 hours of receipt. The Course Director will respond to the student and instructor by Email within three working days of receipt of the submission, providing a decision and brief justification.

I,_____, (Last 4 of SSN #)_____, have informally discussed the disputed grade with my instructor and am not satisfied with the resolution. Therefore, I am submitting a formal appeal for review by my instructor and for final decision by the Department Chair (or equivalent). I understand the resulting grade may be lower, higher, or remain the same and that the Department Chair's (or equivalent) decision is final.

Course name and section: _____

Course instructor name: _____

When course was taken:_____Grade received:_____Grade sought: _____

Student Signature_____   Date: _____

(Typed Name and attached request to the Course Director from the instructor's personal Email account is acceptable in lieu of signature)

Date/Time Appeal Received by Instructor: _____   Instructor initials: _____